

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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No. 1240

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 1922

Price 7 Cents

THE BRADYS AND THE VEILED PICTURE; OR, SENTENCED FOR LIFE TO SILENCE.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.
AND OTHER STORIES



The portieres were swept aside and the horrible face of the big man appeared Both detectives

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CHAPTER I.—The Widow Who Fell In Love With A Face.

She was a strikingly beautiful young woman and she came bursting into the office of the Brady Detective Bureau on Union Square, New York, all aglow with excitement.

"Can I see Old King Brady?" she demanded of the clerk.

"He is not in just at present, miss," was the reply.

"Is either one of them in?"

"Yes. As I was just going to say, Miss Montgomery is in."

"Oh! He has a lady partner?"

"Yes."

"That will be just the thing. I shall be able to make her understand me better than a man could. May I see her now?"

"I think so. I will ascertain if you will kindly give me your card."

The card handed to the clerk bore the name:

"Mrs. Von Beck."

The clerk passed into the inner office and presently returned with word that Miss Montgomery would see Mrs. Von Beck and the young woman was shown into a handsomely furnished office where she was received by Alice Montgomery, the able female assistant of the Brady Detective Bureau.

"You wished to see me?" demanded Alice, looking up from a letter which she was writing.

"If I may intrude for a few minutes. I wanted to consult this bureau about a matter in which I am very deeply interested."

"Very well. I shall be pleased to confer with you."

"To begin with I suppose I ought to explain who I am."

"I think I know."

"Ah! You have read about me in the papers?"

"You are the lady who married the millionaire, Louis Von Beck?"

"I am. Of course you know I was nothing but a hello girl in the telephone office when I met Mr. Von Beck, but I don't know that it is anything against me."

"Certainly not, Mrs. Von Beck. I did not intend to intimate anything of the sort."

"Well, it is this way," began Mrs. Von Beck, getting down to business at last. "I suppose you

know that my husband was killed in an automobile accident two weeks after we were married and by his will left me two million dollars."

"So I have understood."

"Well, you see, Miss Montgomery, I have been living at different fashionable hotels with Mrs. Martin, my chaperone, but about three weeks ago I got tired of that sort of life and determined to start housekeeping in New York, where I could entertain people as I liked and have a little more home life than we can get in a hotel, so I hired a furnished house, No. — Fifth avenue, near Thirty-eight street. The house had been the home of the Foster family for a number of years, but now that old Mrs. Foster is dead it passed into other hands and was offered to rent, furnished, so I hired it and we moved in about a week ago."

Mrs. Von Beck spoke very rapidly and her excitement seemed to increased as she continued. Naturally, Alice wondered what she was driving at and if she could ever get to the point.

"There was one singular provision in the lease, Mrs. Montgomery, and that was that a certain picture which hung over the mantel in the reception room and which is veiled with crepe should be allowed to remain so."

"The lessee was not forbidden to look at the picture. I suppose they thought that it would be of no use to make such a senseless provision, but it was forbidden to remove the veil permanently. If this was done the lease was to be forfeited."

"And of course," said Alice with a smile, "you looked at the picture first thing?"

"Why certainly, Miss Montgomery!" cried Mrs. Von Beck. "Of course I did. Wouldn't you?"

"And it proved to be?"

"It proved to be the portrait of just the loveliest young man you ever laid eyes on. Oh, so handsome! You can't imagine! Such a nose! Such a mouth! Such deep pensive eyes, with wavy brown hair and—and——"

"And you have fallen in love with the face," said Alice quietly, "and you want me to find out who the original is?"

"Ah! I am so glad I met you instead of Old King Brady, Miss Montgomery. You understand how a woman feels! Yes, it is as you say. I have fallen in love with a face. I want to know all about the original. He may be dead, of course, but if he isn't——"

"You propose to marry

"I confess it. If he will have me, of course."

"And what have you been able to learn about the matter?"

"Nothing at all. Not the least thing. When I paid my rent I asked the agent whose picture it was. The horrid man—he is a perfectly horrid man—was just as disagreeable as ever he could be. He told me that he didn't know anything about the picture and he gave me to understand that it was none of my business, anyway. He went ever further than that and gave me to understand that if I didn't let the picture alone he would cancel the lease. The old brute! I could have just slapped his face, so I could."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Nicholas Birdsong. Such a fool name, too! He has an office on Sixth avenue, near Forty-second street. Oh, you can't get anything out of him!"

"And you want us to solve the mystery of this veiled picture?"

"Yes. Not only that but I want full information about the original. If he is alive and unmarried I want you to bring us together. Do you ever undertake a case like that?"

"Well, I admit it is rather an unusual case. However, we are not at all busy at present and I have no doubt I can induce Old King Brady to take it up if you care to pay for such work."

"Oh, thank you, very much! When can you call on me and see the picture, Miss Montgomery?"

"When would you like to have me call?"

"If it would not be asking too much I should like to have you go with me now. My automobile is at the door."

"I can go if you will wait until I have finished this letter. You have struck us at a good time, as I said. We have nothing particular on hand. Were it otherwise Old King Brady would never think of undertaking such a case."

So Alice finished her letter and then accompanied Mrs. Von Beck to her home. The house proved to be one of those old-fashioned four-story brick dwellings which are so rapidly disappearing from lower Fifth avenue. As Alice was ushered in she saw that it was most expensively furnished, but everything was exceedingly old-fashioned. Mrs. Von Beck led the way into a reception room at the end of the hall. And here was the veiled picture. It hung over the mantelpiece, shrouded in crept. Mrs. Von Beck kicked a hassock up against the register and standing upon it, pulled the veil aside. A portrait of a young man of perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three was revealed.

"Have you taken it down to see if there is anything written on the back?" inquired Alice.

"No," replied Mrs. Von Beck. "The clause in the lease says that it must not be disturbed."

"What of that? I can easily put it back again so that nobody will know."

"But the crepe is nailed to the wall."

"I will remove the nails. Get me a screw-driver and tack hammer if you have one, Mrs. Von Beck. We must make this investigation thorough."

Mrs. Von Beck hurried away and soon returned with the tools. Alice climbed on a chair and made short work of removing the picture. It was rather a tax on Alice's strength to take

the picture down, for the frame was very heavy, so she simply turned it around. Across the back was scrawled some words in lead pencil. But disappointment came with the reading.

"My Ned on his twenty-first birthday."

This was all.

"Oh! My favorite name!" Mrs. Von Beck cried. "My Ned! Well, Miss Montgomery, you go ahead and make him my Ned and I am your friends for life."

Alice laughed and proceeded to restore the picture to its original situation, which she did with so much skill that no one would ever have guessed that it had been disturbed.

CHAPTER II.—Old King Brady Makes A Find.

Old King Brady laughed when Alice told him about Mrs. Von Beck's case, and Young King Brady, formerly pupil of the world-famous detective, said it was "all nonsense."

Old King Brady, who knows the history of probably two-thirds of the Fifth avenue families, was posted on that of the Fosters to a certain extent.

"That Mrs. Foster the woman speaks of was the widow of the late Benjamin Foster, for many years prominent in the wholesale dry goods trade," he went on to say. "Old Foster left a large fortune for a man of his time and what is more it was honestly made. He was an old man when I first came to New York and has been dead many years. His son, also a Benjamin, succeeded him, but he died some time ago and the business passed into other hands. I never heard that Benjamin, junior, had brothers, nor do I know anything about his descendants. The old lady must have been far advanced in years if she is but recently dead."

"And how shall we get at the facts?" inquired Alice.

"It is a thing easily done," was the reply. "The first step is to look up the wills of these people. Benjamin, senior; Benjamin, junior, and old Mrs. Foster. This will be a starter and you and Harry better undertake it. Meanwhile I will look up the matter from a real estate standpoint. I happen to know a man on Broadway who makes a specialty of Fifth avenue property. He will be sure to know all about that house."

So Old King Brady started out to confer with his real estate friend, a Mr. Ayres, who had done considerable business for the old detective himself. Mr. Ayres received the old detective with the consideration due to his standing.

"Yes, I know all about that property," he said. "It won't come on the market for some months yet. That is why they are willing to rent it furnished."

"I have been requested by certain parties to look into it, not particularly with the intention of buying," said Old King Brady. "but because they want information about the Foster family."

"I can imagine it is someone in my line who wants to get hold of that lot and put old man Birdsong's nose out of joint. Someone who thinks he can prove that young Ned Foster still lives."

"Ah!" said the old detective. "Perhaps you are right. But you are willing to give me full information, I suppose?"

"All I possess, yes, certainly, Mr. Brady. Why not?"

"Then to begin with, who owns the house?"

"Nicholas Birdsong, provisionally."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why it is like this: The house is a part of old Mrs. Foster's estate. Birdsong is her nephew and was for years her attorney. Her husband died years ago; the old lady died about a year since, aged eighty-eight. She was the last of the family, except Ned Foster, her grandson. Hold on to him."

"I've got him fast. Go on."

"Old Foster only had one child, a son, Benjamin, junior, who succeeded him in business. He was the father of New Foster. He was a sickly man and he made a bad fist of his father's business. His wife died when the boy Ned was born. A year later the husband died, leaving everything he owned to his son, with the grandmother as guardian."

"I follow you. Now we come to Ned to whom I am holding on like grim death."

"Yes. He was brought up by the grandmother and well educated. He was, however, of a roving disposition. When he was about twenty-two years old—that was three years ago, say—he joined a lot of gold hunters and went down to Venezuela. He died there in prison. You see his company were unfortunate enough to strike a valuable gold mine. Castro, the Dictator-President, got wind of it, and finding that the claim was likely to prove valuable, adopted his usual tactics. He seized the mine and arrested the owners, five in number. Three were shot and two, Ned Foster and one of them, were sentenced for life to solitary confinement on a trumped-up charge of trying to start a revolution. A year later both were dead, as the story goes, but this old Mrs. Foster would never believe. She persisted in claiming that Ned was alive and would return. She held to the belief until the hour of her death."

"You certainly have it all down pat. And how does this affect the property?"

"This way. Before Ned left for Venezuela he made a will in his grandmother's favor. This will the old lady refused to offer for probate, although it is understood that her nephew, Birdsong, urged her strongly to do so. She made her own will the night before she died, leaving all her estate to Ned, providing he turned up within a year. If not it was to go to Birdsong and Ned's will was to be probated at the same time as her own."

And this was the extent of the information obtained from Mr. Aylres. Old King Brady now felt that he would like to have a look at the veiled portrait for himself, so he proceeded to the old Foster mansion on Fifth avenue and rang the bell. His card obtained him ready admittance and in a few minutes Mrs. Von Beck joined him in the reception room.

"Oh, Mrs. Brady!" exclaimed the young widow. "I am so glad you called. So good of you. Do you think you can help me?"

"Well, that is what I am here for, ma'am," replied the old detective. "I have taken the mat-

ter up and I shall certainly do the best I can. I came here now to see this famous veiled picture."

"Well, there it hangs. Have you looked at it?"

"Not yet. I was waiting for you."

"Go ahead."

Old King Brady being tall enough drew aside the veil without standing on the hassock. He judged as Alice had done that the original was a person of no very great force of character.

"It is only right that I should tell you before we proceed any further, Mrs. Von Beck, that I now know with reasonable certainty who the original is."

"And who?"

"Edward Foster, grandson of the old lady who owned this house."

"Well, that is something to begin with. Have you learned any more? Is he alive?"

"He is supposed to be dead."

Mrs. Von Beck gave a shriek and clasped her hands.

"Oh, don't tell me that!" she cried. "I just can't believe it! So there!"

"There seems to have been grave doubts about his death in his grandmother's mind," said Old King Brady, and he went on to relate the story of the Foster family as he had obtained it from Mr. Ayres.

Mrs. Von Beck seized upon the straw of hope.

"Oh, the grandmother knew!" she exclaimed.

"She probably had good reason for what she did. As for that horrid man, Mr. Birdsong, I would be willing to believe anything of him. You just ought to see him for yourself, Mr. Brady, and you would know what an important man he is."

Old King Brady made no answer to all this, but like Alice, asked for a screwdriver and hammer, which having been obtained, he proceeded to unfasten the crepe and then took the veiled picture down. And right here Old King Brady proved himself a little more observing than his partner. This picture had a backboard carefully fitted in. It occurred to Old King Brady that so unusual a thing as fitting a backboard to an old picture could hardly have been done without some distinct purpose.

"I am going to take this board off," he said to Mrs. Von Beck.

"I don't care what you do. Go ahead."

Old King Brady then drew out the nails and removed the backboard. Inside lay a folded paper.

"Well! I've a beat on Alice for once!" the old detective inwardly chuckled, and he took out the paper.

Upon the back, typewritten, was the following:

"Last Will and Testament of Maria Foster."

Old King Brady had made a find.

CHAPTER III.—Getting Down to Work.

"What is it? What have you got?" demanded Mrs. Von Beck.

"Seems to be old Mrs. Foster's will," replied the detective.

Old King Brady opened the will, which was pen written, and hastily ran it over.

"This appears to have been made but a very short time before the old lady's death," he said. "It leaves everythig to Ned Foster and ties the estate up ten years to await his return if positive proofs of his death cannot be made."

"And the other will is dated when?" demanded Mrs. Von Beck.

"I don't know the exact date, but I shall before the day is over."

"It may be later than the other."

"I am inclined to think it will prove to be so."

"And in case Ned don't turn up, who gets the dough?"

"Five charitable institutions are named."

"Good! Oh, I just hope it turns out that Ned is alive, if it is only to queer that horrid man!"

But Mrs. Von Beck's enthusiasm did not interest Old King Brady. He accordingly restored the veiled picture to its original condition and took his leave, returning to his office. Here he found Harry and Alice just back from the Surrogate's office, downtown.

"Well, and what is the report?" he asked.

The report given by Harry corresponded with that of Mr. Ayres. The two wills, Mrs. Foster's and Ned Foster's, had been offered for probate it seemed, and were now held up awaiting the expiration of the appointed time when Ned Foster was to be declared legally dead.

"What is the date of the old lady's will?" demanded Old King Brady.

Harry named it. The date was nearly a year earlier than the will which the old detective had found behind the veiled picture. The Bradys and Alice looked at each other for several seconds before either spoke.

"How about the witnesses? These are John Henry Jump and Susan Dooley."

"The witnesses to the other will are Andrew Blake and Margaret Pine."

"Get the directory and see if we can locate these people."

Harry obeyed. The result was not encouraging. There were five Andrew Blakes and seven Margaret Pines in the New York Directory that year. None of these was down as a servant. The names of the witnesses to the new will were now looked up. Jump, of course, is an uncommon name. Yet the old detective found two. One was Joseph Jump, down as a truck driver, while the other was John H. Jump, butler, and the residence was the number on Fifth avenue of Mrs. Foster's house! But there were a dozen Susan Dooleys and five of them were down as servants.

"There isn't the slightest doubt that this will is the real goods," said Old King Brady. "However, we must verify the signatures before we decide."

And with this end in view Harry and Alice returned to the Surrogate's office, accompanied by the old detective. Here the old detective, who is an expert in such matters, carefully compared the signature under a powerful glass. Unhesitatingly he pronounced the signature on the earlier will presented by Nicholas Birdsong for probate a clever forgery.

"It certainly looks bad for Birdsong," remarked Harry when they got outside.

"It does, indeed," replied the old detective.

They walked down Chambers street to Broadway and up Broadway several blocks before he spoke again.

"Now to lay out our work," he suddenly said. "Harry you make up like a man-servant and get up on Fifth avenue. Call at the basement doors of the houses adjoining Mrs. Foster's and see what you can learn about Jump and the Dooley woman."

Harry nodded. He expected just such orders.

"You Alice," continued Old King Brady, "will get to the Venezuelan consul's office and find out all you can about the conviction of Ned Foster and his associates. The man may know nothing, but such things are very common down in Venezuela. On the other hand he may be fully posted in the matter."

"And you?" demanded Harry.

"Oh, I haven't fully determined what to do," replied Old King Brady, "but I leave you now."

He walked on down Broadway until he came to one of the old buildings below Tin Pot Alley where there was a sign up, "Offices to Let."

Old King Brady looked up the agent, a man with whom he had had dealings before.

"Dewson," he said, "have you a small vacant office which I can use for a week or so?"

"Yes, three," was the reply. "What do you want?"

"I have a case on hand in which I wish to figure as a private detective, but not under my own name."

"I see. I have just the place for you, an office on the top floor, furnished. Man skipped out and didn't pay his rent; left all his stuff behind him. I have been trying to get a tenant, but so far have failed."

"Very good. Let me see your office."

Old King Brady was shown the premises then and he paid a month's rent and took the key. He then hurried around to Church street and climbed stairs to a paint shop. Here he presented his card and said:

"I want to buy a second-hand sign. Don't care what the name is, so long as it isn't a woman's."

The painter smiled.

"That's the first time I ever had a call like this," he said, "but what is it you want?"

"Why, you see," said Old King Brady, "I have a case on hand where I want to give the impression to a certain party that I have been a long while established in an office I have just taken."

"I think I have just what you want," said the painter, and opening a closet he unearthed a sign which bore the name:

"Peter H. Grossmeyer."

It was old and the paint had cracked in places. Below the name was a considerable blank space.

"Could you paint in the word 'detective' under the name and make it look as old as the rest?"

"Easily. No trouble at all."

"Do it," said the old detective, "and put up the sign during the day without fail."

He gave the painter the address and paying for the painting, for the man would take nothing for the sign, departed. Old King Brady's next call was at his printer's, where he gave a hurry order for some letter heads and envelopes bear-

ing the name, "Peter H. Grossmeyer, Detective," with the Broadway address.

"Now then," chuckled Old Old King Brady when he left the printer's, "I think I may fairly claim to have made a good start."

It is a wonder that Alice did not meet Old King Brady for her business also lay downtown. The office of the Venezuelan consul at that time was on South William street, upstairs over a wine importer's store. Rafael Gomez was the name on the sign and Alice climbed the dark stairs to find Senor Gomez a dried-up, little old fellow, whose fingers were yellow with the cigarette which had helped to dry him. As Alice had received no particular instructions she took her own head and it pleased her to introduce herself as "Miss Doubleday."

"I want to find out some particulars concerning the death of a cousin of mine," she said. "He was in prison in Venezuela and it is understood that he died there. I have been abroad for some time and have just returned to New York. My cousin's people are all dead and I really don't know who to apply to so I came here."

"Vot vas de name?" he demanded.

"Edward Foster."

"I never heard of him. How long ago?"

Alice gave a few particulars.

"I know nothing," said the consul shortly. It is no use to come to me."

Then Alice sprung a surprise on the old fellow. She began all over again in Spanish which she can speak fluently. Gomez relaxed at once.

"I tell you, Miss Doubleday," he said confidentially, "we have to be very careful. My country is in a very peculiar situation. Senor Castro is as absolute as the Emperor of Russia used to be in old times. There are many things I know which I would not dare to speak. But I should like to help you. Perhaps I can."

"I was sure you would if you could, just as soon as I saw you," replied Alice.

"Ah, so! And why?"

"Oh, I can tell a gentleman when I see one."

The little man grinned.

"You are a sharp woman," he said. "Well, now, let me see. I remember that affair for I was in Caracas at the time. Those two men, Foster and Skinner were certainly the names, were sentenced to the castle at Maracaibo to solitary confinement, and what was worse they were sentenced for life to silence. No man was allowed to speak to them. If either uttered a word he was to be shot. The other three were shot immediately after their arrest."

"This you know?" said Alice.

"That I know personally," was the reply. "Now, as for the rest as my memory serves me, one of those young men went raving mad, broke the rule and spoke. He was shot. The other escaped from the castle and what became of him was never known. He was in prison a considerable time, something over a year, I believe. Which one he was I cannot say, for if you care to be at the expense of a cablegram to Caracas I can ascertain."

"Most certainly, and I shall be very thankful to you," replied Alice. "Don't spare expense, Senor Gomez. Let the answer be as full as

possible, only don't get yourself into trouble on my account."

"There is no danger of that. I shall cable in cipher and the person who receives the message is deeply indebted to me. It will never see the light of day."

"And when may I expect an answer?"

"It is impossible to say. It may take my man some days to look up the facts, but you can rely upon its being done to the best of his ability. If you will give me your address I will write you."

"If it will suit you just as well I will call each day until the answer is received," replied Alice. "I am staying with friends and my movements are uncertain."

To this Senor Gomez assented and Alice left to run into Old King Brady on Broadway to whom she related what she had done.

"Good!" exclaimed the old detective. "You have made a splendid start and we have an even chance of finding that our Ned Foster was the one who escaped."

CHAPTER IV.—Harry Scores A Point.

Harry went back to the office where he went into the costume room, which the Bradys keep in connection with their bureau, and there made up to suit the part he was about to play. Needless to say that when he presented himself at the basement door of the house next below Mrs. Foster's he looked the young man-servant to perfection. Here he rang the bell and a maid appeared in answer.

"Can you tell me," asked Harry, "whatver became of John Jump, who used to be butler next door when old Mrs. Foster lived there?"

"I'm sure I would if I could, young man," replied the woman, "but you see we are all newcomers here. This house changed hands only three months ago. I never heard of old Mrs. Foster."

"This settled it, of course, and Harry pulled out to tackle the next house, above Mrs. Von Beck's.

And here he was successful. This house proved to be the residence of an old New York family. The servants had scarcely changed in many years. Harry was invited into the kitchen where he had an interview with Mrs. Murphy, the cook. The woman informed him that she had been well acquainted with John Jump. The man, according to Mrs. Murphy, had been butler for Mrs. Foster for many years and was almost as old as his mistress.

"I'm sure I don't know if he is alive or not," said the cook, "but he left his address with the postman. He went to live with a married daughter and that is all any of us knows here."

Harry concluded to wait for the coming of the postman, so he took up his station outside. In due time his patience was rewarded. The postman consulted a memorandum book and gave the address:

"John Henry Jump, care of Mrs. Bridgens, 333 Wingfield avenue; Long Island City.

This meant a pilgrimage into the little known Dutch Kills region on the Long Island side of the East River. Harry got there eventually.

although he began to think that he never should. The house proved to be a three story frame building and Mrs. B idgens resided on the top floor. Harry climbed the stairs and knocked. To his immense satisfaction the door was opened by an old white-haired man, who announced that he was John Henry Jump. Young King Brady came down to business at once.

"Mr. Jump, I am a detective. I am trying to get some information about old Mrs. Foster of No. — Fifth avenue, where you were once butler. I came to see if you could help me out."

There was a middle-aged woman and two little children in the room. The woman interfered at once.

"What do you want to know and who do you want to know it for?" she cried. "My father is nearly eighty years old and he's not to be bothered with detectives and lawyers. What is it all about?"

"Ah, shut up, Maggie!" said the old man. "You don't give the young man a chance to open his mouth. I was over thirty years butler to Mrs. Foster, sir. What I don't know about her isn't worth knowing, but as me daughler rightly says I ought first to know who sent you and why do you ask."

"It is like this, Mr. Jump. We have been hired by a certain party to look into the matter of Edward Foster's death. Then there is some doubt about the old lady's will——"

"Doubt about her will?" cried the butler. "Why I signed as witness myself. I seen her sign with me own eyes. Susan Dooley, the housemaid, witnessed with me. Mr. Ramsay, her lawyer, drew up the will. There can't be any doubt about it, sir."

"Just the same there is," replied Young King Brady. "The will which Mr. Birdsong has offered for probate does not bear your signature as witness nor that of Susan Dooley, but two entirely different names."

"Birdsong!" cried the butler. "Birdsong! The old beat. He's the worst man ever. He chased us all out just as soon as the funeral was over and never a bit of warning, and me with the family over thirty years."

"Listen!" said Harry. "I can get at this business better by asking a few questions and you just answer. In the first place when did Mrs. Foster make her will?"

The butler gave the exact date.

"Was she in her usual health then?" asked Harry.

"Just as she had been since she heard of Mr. Ned's death. Feeble, but sound in the head. Oh, yes; she was sound in the head!"

"Do you know where I can find Mr. Ramsay, the lawyer?" Harry asked.

"He's dead, sir. He dropped dead a week after he drew the will."

"And how long did Mrs. Foster live?"

"A month and two days, sir. Then one morning we found the poor lady dead in her bed, rest her soul."

"And Birdsong stepped right in and took hold?"

"Yes, sir. And chased us all out. If he had the right I don't know. You say not? I thought so at the time."

"Now about Ned Foster. The old lady believed him dead?"

"Not she, sir. She never would own up to it. Yet she must have, for she hung a veil over his picture in the reception room."

"He is supposed to have died in South America, I believe."

"Yes, sir. What's this they call the place now?"

"Venezuela."

"Not that, yet I heard that name, too."

"Perhaps it was Maracaibo?"

"Yes, that was the place. They put him in jail for life and if he spoke to anyone he was to be shot."

"Sentenced for life to silence?"

"That was it. It nearly killed the old lady when she heard it."

"How did she get the news?"

"I don't know, sir. I never heard. Then after awhile word came that Mr. Ned spoke to somebody, one of the jailers, I suppose, and they shot him for doing it. That finished his grandmother. She was never the same woman afterwards."

"Was Mr. Birdsong in the habit of coming to the house much?"

"He came once in a while, sir, after Mr. Ned's death. Before that he used to come and try to see his aunt, but she would never see him. Many's the time I've showed him the door. To think I should have lived to get the bounce from him in the end. But tell me, sir, is there really reason to believe that Mr. Ned still lives?"

"Some; not much. The real question is whether the will Birdsong is trying to put through is genuine or not."

"Does this will cut off Mr. Ned, sir?"

"No. It doesn't do that, but it gives all to Birdsong in case Ned's death is proved."

"Then it is bogus, sir, and that's one sure thing. Mrs. Foster never would have left her property to Birdsong in the wide world. Why she hated the man and I'll go on the stand in court and swear to it any time."

"There is one question more I want to ask," said Harry, "and that is about the veiling of Ned's picture. What excuse did Mrs. Foster give for it?"

"She told me she couldn't bear to look at his face, sir."

"When was this? I want the exact date if you can give it."

"I can, sir. It was the very day after she made her will."

Young King Brady left then. Like Alice he felt that he had scored an important point. And Old King Brady agreed with him when Harry came to report his success at the office that afternoon.

"Oh, this certainly settles it!" the old detective said. "We hold the genuine will. Mrs. Foster must have hidden it behind the picture with her own hands, though why is a mystery and it is up to us to solve it, and we shall."

CHAPTER V.—Old King Brady Corners Birdsong.

The first thing Old King Brady did upon arriving at his office next morning was to make a

complete change of costume. This was highly necessary if he wanted to conceal his identity.

For always, when not in disguise, Old King Brady affects a peculiar style of dress. A long blue coat with brass buttons, an old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar and a white felt hat, with an extraordinarily broad brim. By these, "his trade-mark clothes," as Harry calls them, Old King Brady is most widely known. Green spectacles concealed his eyes and long white whiskers completely altered the whole appearance of his face.

"I'm off now," he said, looking into the office. "If I am wanted you can look me up at No. — Broadway, office of Grossmeyer. You can't get me on the 'phone. Come there freely, only be sure to pull right out if you see anyone with me."

With that Old King Brady left. He went directly to his printer's and obtained the stationery which he had ordered the day before. With the package under his arm he pushed into his new office, where he found the sign in place with the word "Detective" so skillfully painted in under the name that no one would ever have guessed that it was not of the same age as the sign itself. The old detective now sat down to write and drew up the following letter:

"Mr. Nicholas Birdsong, City:

"Sir—The undersigned has come into possession of certain information about your affairs which he takes to have a cash value to himself or to you if you care to purchase.

"This information relates to the last will of Mrs. Maria Foster. Not the will you have offered for probate, understand, but the last will.

"A word to the wise is sufficient. You will serve your own interests by calling on me to-day and you may as well understand right that I am a man who works solely in the interest of No. 1.

"Whichever way I choose to work this affair there is bound to be money in it for me, so it is a matter of supreme indifference to me which way I work it. I believe, however, in letting sleeping dogs lie and that the easiest way is always the best way. Therefore, I am going you first chance. Respectfully yours,

"P. H. GROSSMEYER,
"Detective.

"P. S.—You will not find me here after five. To-morrow will probably be too late. G."

This letter Old King Brady addressed to Nicholas Birdsong and despatched by a district messenger. He then sat down at the desk and started in to make a copy of the Foster will. In less than an hour he had completed it and was ready for the real estate man in the case he chose to call. And Birdsong came, but it was not until ten minutes past three. The man was tall and stout, and with a most repulsing face. It was very long, round, with wicked eyes, prominent teeth and a goatee. His clothes were exceedingly shabby; his coat resembled Old King Brady's long black, minus the buttons. In short Mr. Birdsong looked the miser right down to the ground.

"You are Mr. Grossmeyer?" he demanded in a thin, piping voice.

"I am," replied Old King Brady.

"I am Mr. Birdsong. What have you to say to me?"

"My business is to learn what you will give for the information I possess."

"In other words you are a professional black-mailer."

"I am a professional detective."

"Get ahead."

"Be good enough to run over this paper."

Old King Brady produced his copy of the Foster will. Seeing that it was a lengthy document Mr. Birdsong changed his mind and took a chair. He adjusted a pair of eye-glasses and in silence read the document through.

"Well?" he said, leaning back in his chair.

"Well, and what do you propose to do about it?" demanded the old detective.

"My good sir, I propose to do nothing at all."

"Very well. There's the door behind you. Consider the subject closed."

"Let me see the original."

"Not at this stage of the game."

"Have you it with you?"

"Certainly not. I am aware of the kind of man I am dealing with. Incidentally, I am not a fool."

"Do you expect me to buy a pig in a poke?"

"I expect an offer for my pig before I exhibit it. Of course I shall produce the will before I require you to produce the cash."

"Where did you get your alleged will?"

"I decline to answer."

"Did you find it in Mrs. Foster's house?"

"I decline to answer."

"Was the putting of that woman in the house as a tenant apart of your plot against me?"

"You refer to Mrs. Von Beck?"

"Yes, certainly! Who else?"

"I decline to answer."

"You can't prove your will?"

"I can."

"How?"

"By the signature, by the witnesses who signed it."

Mr. Birdsong moistened his thin lips with his tongue.

"How much do you expect?" he demanded, after a few moments in silence.

"Half."

"Absurd."

"Nothing of the sort. If I compound a felony I am entitled to half."

"Your accusation is false. Still, I am willing to admit that you are in a position to make me trouble."

"I should say so!"

"But when you came to talk of half the Foster estate you talk through your hat. Have you any idea how large the estate is?"

"A little under five millions."

"Allowing that you correctly state the amount, do you imagine I am going to let you into my business to the tune of two and a half millions?"

"Why not?"

"Ridiculous?"

"Not from my standpoint."

"I want time to think."

"How much?"

"How can I tell?"

"The matter must be closed to-day. To-morrow I go to the trustees."

"I am going to leave you now. When do you leave here?"

"Five o'clock."

"Very well. Before five o'clock you shall have my decision. But let me understand your terms definitely. Of course I can't sell out the entire Foster estate in a couple of hours and pay you two and a half millions in cash."

"How much cash can you raise?"

"None of your business. State your demand."

"One hundred thousand dollars in cash or good securities and your signature to a paper, stating that your will is a forgery and that you forged it or caused it to be forged, together with an agreement to pay me half the value of the Foster estate."

"Very well. You get my decision before five o'clock."

The big man showed all his glittering white teeth as he said that and then started for the door.

"Hold on!" called Old King Brady.

"What now? The longer you keep me here the later it will be before I can render my decision," retorted Birdsong, turing his head.

"You can spare me a few minutes. I want to ask about Ned Foster who, if alive, gets this property under either will."

The white teeth were instantly in evidence again.

"He gets nothing under my will, for he is dead."

"I understand that the young man got into trouble in Venezuela and along with a companion named Skinner, was sentenced for life to silence."

"Such is the case."

"One of these young men went mad and was shot, the other escaped from the castle at Maracaibo. Which was which?"

"Net Foster went mad and was shot."

"You have proof of this?"

"Letter from the American consul at Caracas."

"Anything else?"

"No; isn't that enough?"

"What became of Skinner?" demanded Old King Brady.

"He was drowned trying to swim to an English steamer."

"Do you know his people?"

"Just at present, yes."

Birdsong immediately opened the door and walked out. Old King Brady lit a cigar and sat down in his chair, chuckling. About half an hour later, Harry, who had been attending to other business, came strolling in.

"I am looking for a good detective," he said.

"Then you have come to the right shop for there are two here now," laughed Old King Brady. "Any news?"

"Nothing particular. None in the veiled picture case. I just left Alice going to the Venezuelan consul. She will look in here on her way home. What's the good word with you?"

"The word is, Harry, that my plans have worked like a charm."

"I suppose you have been setting a trap for Birdsong. Remember, you have not told us a thing about it."

"I know; but I am prepared to tell now."

And Old King Brady went in to tell of his remarkable interview with the real estate man. He had scarcely finished when Alice came into the office.

"Ah! Here she is now!" cried Harry. "Well, is Ned alive or dead?"

"Don't know," replied Alice. "Here is the answer to the consul's cablegram. You must judge for yourself."

And Alice produced a paper.

"The original answer came in cipher," she exclaimed. "This is the translation Mr. Gomez made for me. Shall I read it aloud?"

"Do so, please," replied Old King Brady, and Alice read as follows:

"Maracaibo, —, —."

"Gomez, N. Y."

"Edward Foster escaped from the castle. Skinner went mad and was shot. It is known that Foster reached the English tramp steamer, Shoreditch Castle, bound for New York. No further information to be had."

CHAPTER VI.—Brother Birdsong Sets A Trap for the Bradys.

"Well!" exclaimed Old King Brady, "this is certainly very satisfactory. You have managed your end of the business beautifully, Alice. Now we have a good fighting chance of finding Ned Foster alive unless, indeed, his cousin, Birdsong, has murdered him."

"Or that Birdsong has clapped him into some private lunatic asylum," suggested Alice.

"That is another and an excellent reason. Then the information that the Shoreditch Castle was bound for New York may be false. The boy may have been landed in some foreign port, where he has been detained for want of money to get home. His letters were bound to fall into Birdsong's hands, I suppose."

"That is the weakest supposition of all," said Harry. "Still it might be so. But what is the programme now?"

"We must wait until five o'clock."

"Shall we stay here?" inquired Alice.

Old King Brady looked at his watch.

"Why, it is half-past four now," he said. "If the man means to act at all he will have to be quick. Perhaps you better hang around downstairs for the next half hour. I shall wait until half-past five and not a second later."

Alice and Harry pulled out. They might just as well have stayed. Old King Brady's only reason for chasing them out with his fear that Birdsong might return in person, and that did not happen. Instead, at about a quarter to five, a messenger boy brought in a letter which read as follows:

"Mr. Grossmeyer:

"Sir—I have decided to accept your terms."

"If you want to do business with me call at my house this evening about nine o'clock. I live at No. 268 Van Linderen avenue. Bronx."

"Yours,

N. BIRDSONG."

Old King Brady at once closed up and hurried downstairs when he exhibited the letter to Harry and Alice.

"That calls you to the other end of creation, Governor," the former remarked. "It may be a trap. You mustn't go there alone."

"I don't like to have people say must or mustn't to me," replied the old detective. "However, as it happens I don't intend to go there alone. You are to go with me."

"I wouldn't take the will with me if I was you."

"Wouldn't you? I can assure you that I have no such intention."

"Where is it now?"

"In safe hands. Come and help me get it."

Old King Brady led the way around to Fulton street, where on the top floor of an old building the introduced his partners to a Mr. Brown, a professional penman.

"Got that job done?" inquired the old detective.

"I have," was the reply, "and I feel like a forger. I hope no trouble may come out of this."

"You may rest assured that none will while you do business with me."

Brown then produced old Mrs. Foster will and a copy which he had made. It was really a wonderful piece of work. The paper corresponded exactly—Old King Brady had seen to that. That evening the Bradys made a pilgrimage to the Bronx. It was a long pull, for Van Linderen avenue proved to be the very jumping-off place. The Bradys struck in at its beginning where there was a row of new houses. Fields followed; in the distance an old mansion could be seen. It was the only house on that side of the way.

"That must be the place," remarked Old King Brady.

"Here comes a policeman. Let us asked him."

Old King Brady tackled the officer. Being still in his peculiar disguise the old detective was not recognized, of course. But his detective's shield did the business and the policeman was willing enough to talk.

"Yes, that is Mr. Birdsong's house," he said. "At lease he lives there. The house belongs to the Foster estate."

"What kind of a man is Birdsong?" demanded Old King Brady.

"A regular old miser," was the reply. "Why he has that house guarded like a fortress. It is full of burglar alarms. No one can touch a door or a window without starting bells ringing."

"Does the man keep his money locked up in the house, then?"

"Don't know," replied the policeman. "That's what they say. I should hate to be the burglar who tackled the job. They saw he has man traps and spring guns in there, too. But what are you driving at? Birdsong isn't wanted for anything, is he?"

"Oh, no! He has just hired us to do a job for him and we are to meet him to-night. I wanted to know something about the man, that is all."

They shook the policeman and proceeded to the house. It was a ruinous old place surrounded by a broken fence, a neglected garden and many ancient trees. Old King Brady pulled the bell.

It was as the officer said. The moment he laid hands on the door knob, which he did to see if the door was locked, bells began ringing all over the house. They waited nearly five minutes and nothing doing. Harry was for ringing again, but Old King Brady restrained him.

"Wait!" he said. "He is certainly in there. I want to see what he will do."

At last when their patience was all but exhausted the shutters were opened at an open window and the hideous face of Mr. Birdsong was seen peering out.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he exclaimed. "I was just taking a bath. Who is this other man? I thought you were coming alone."

"This is my witness," replied Old King Brady calmly.

"Witness!"

"Yes."

"Is this a fair shake? Where is my witness? I am alone in this house."

"Can't help it. I don't enter your house alone, my friend."

"But this wasn't in the bargain."

"All the same it has to stand."

"Is that young man fully in your confidence?"

"Fully. He knows all."

"You are afraid of me. I see."

"Nonsense! Why should I be?"

"Have you the will?"

"I have. I am ready to deliver the goods and I trust you are in the same situation."

"Wait! I will let you in, but beware how you attempt to monkey with me. I am a dangerous man."

"So am I. We are equally matched on that score."

The shutter was slammed then and Birdsong disappeared. About three minutes later it opened again. The Bradys in the meanwhile heard no sound. Birdsong looked out.

"Hello, down there!" he called.

"Hello!" replied Old King Brady.

"I can't come down. I have stumbled and hurt my foot. Go around to the back door, which you will find unfastened. There is a lantern hanging in the hall, take it and come upstairs. Follow the corridor to the last door on your left, open it and you will find me in the room."

Again the shutter slammed and the head disappeared.

"A trap, surest thing," breathed Harry.

"I have little doubt of it," replied Old King Brady, "we must be on our guard."

They went around the house and tried the back door. It was unfastened and no bells rang when they opened it. Hanging on a nail was a lighted lantern.

"See here, Harry," whispered Old King Brady, "the case is plain. He slipped down these stairs, set the trap and opened the door. We must observe every care."

Old King Brady took down the lantern and drawing his revolver, cautiously advanced. With each step he took he tested the boards beneath his feet. The hall was bare and unfurnished, the stairs uncarpeted. But they did not close up on the detectives and they reached the top in safety.

"Look out!" cautioned Harry.

"I'm wide awake," was the reply.

The corridor was a long one and the Bradys had come in at one end of it. It was unlighted and entirely bare. The old detective advanced with the utmost caution, putting his foot down noiselessly but hard with each step he took. And it was well that he observed this precaution, for he had not gone five steps before under this pressure a trap door of considerable length, extending the entire width of the hall, suddenly sank down. Old King Brady pulled back just in time.

CHAPTER VII.—Old King Brady's Big Find.

As Old King Brady felt the floor giving way under his feet he left out a yell which might have been heard out on the avenue. At the same instant he jumped through one of the many doors which opened on the corridor. Harry, quick to catch on, darted after him and pushed the door shut.

"Open it. Get behind the door!" breathed Old King Brady. "We mustn't change conditions in the least."

They could hear a shuffling further along the hall. The shrewd old detective blew the light out first thing. With Harry, he peered through the crack of the half open door. In a few seconds the light appeared. It moved forward and they saw Nicholas Birdsong, holding a cheap metal lamp, come into view. The expression on this man's face, if it had made it hideous before, was not positively fiendish.

"Ah, ha! Ah, ha!" he hissed. "Now I've got them!"

He gave a chuckling laugh, and leaning forward, held the lamp so that its light struck down through the open trap.

"Hello, down there!" he shouted. "How do you find my cellar? Rather damp, hep?"

Then after a minute he muttered:

"They don't answer. They must both be dead. Confound this lamp! The light won't carry. I can't see whether they are there or not. But I must find out, and I must get the will."

He pulled at something. The Bradys saw the trap door come up into place. It closed with a snap, and the man walked right over it. Apparently he had no doubt of the success of his nefarious scheme, for he looked in none of the rooms. The Bradys heard him descending the stairs.

"Quick, Harry! We must do business here while we have the chance," breathed Old King Brady. "You guard the head of the stairs. I'm going into his room."

Harry shot along the corridor in one direction, while Old King Brady took the other. A light shining through an open door guided him, and he entered a large and fairly well furnished chamber. Here there was a desk with a student lamp standing lighted upon it. The desk was strewn with papers, among which were several letters. Old King Brady swept the whole business into his pocket and retreated. He was just taking his chance upon having secured something which would give him a further hold upon his man. He gained Harry's side in a few seconds.

"See anything of him?" he asked.

"No."

"Then we slope. Let us hope that the door is unfastened, and we start no alarm bell's ringing."

And they were thus blessed. A few seconds later and they had gained the garden. They could see a light flashing behind the low cellar windows. Unquestionably it was from the lamp held in the hand of Nicholas Birdsong. The real estate man was searching for the bodies of "Detective Grossmeyer," and his witness. The Bradys lost not a second in getting away. Once clear of the house, they ran until they reached the inhabited section. But no one came after them, and at length they slowed down, and Harry laughed until he was out of breath.

"That's the slickest turn you have done in a long time, Governor," he finally said.

"Well," said Old King Brady, "I am not quite a dead one yet, I hope."

"What did you see in the room?"

"Why, it seemed to be an office and bedroom combined, Harry. There were a lot of loose papers and letters lying upon an open desk, and I swiped them all. Don't know that it will amount to anything, but we shall see."

They pushed on to the end of the subway, where they soon found themselves seated in a train.

"Now to see what you have got, you blessed old thief," chuckled Harry.

Old King Brady began to pull out the papers one at a time. But disappointment came with the operation. Every paper and each letter proved to have reference only to Birdsong's real estate business.

"A wretched haul," sighed Old King Brady.

"At least you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have put him to a lot of trouble," replied Harry.

"Slim satisfaction that, and I care for none of it. I shall return this stuff in the next letter I write him."

"Which will read how?"

"Oh, don't ask me yet. I haven't made up my mind."

"If I may be allowed to express my mind, I wouldn't write at all."

"And why?"

"Let him come to you. He will simply have to."

"That's what he will. He won't dare to do otherwise. It would not surprise me if he turned up first thing to-morrow morning."

The Bradys now returned to the old house on Washington Square, where they have kept bachelors' halls for several years. Harry was feeling rather tired, and he started for bed. Old King Brady came rushing into his room just as he got into his pajamas.

"By jove, Harry. I missed one of those letters!" he exclaimed. "It went down into the lining of this old coat."

"Important?"

"You bet it is important. Listen!"

And Old King Brady read as follows:

"White Plains. ———"

"Mr. Birdsong.—Sir: Another week has passed and your check has failed to materialize. I can do business in no such fashion. I want you

to understand that the keeping of a sane man in a place like mine is exceedingly dangerous business. Most certainly it calls for prompt payment on the part of the one thus obliged. If I don't hear from you immediately, I shall take steps to get square. I don't know what you may be driving at by keeping this young fellow dead to the world, but I know what I intend to drive at unless I am paid, and that is to learn your little game. Perhaps when I have completed my investigations I shall have discovered that it will be more to my profit to forget you than to proceed further in your interest. A word to the wise should be sufficient, my parsimonious friend. Pay up! Come up! Cash in. If you don't, we part company. Don't you imagine that for one instant I think you have any hold on yours truly,

Thomas F. Gilbertson, M.D."

"Come!" cried Harry, "that's all right. Ned Foster still lives."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Old King Brady. "Now our course is plain."

"What do you propose?"

"To tackle Dr. Gilbertson next."

"In your present disguise?"

"Yes. That will be best."

"If Birdsong has paid up, you may find him a tough subject."

"Don't you fret. I'll get the best of the scoundrel. This is great luck. Now we must wait for Birdsong to turn up to-morrow."

"Take my advice, Governor, and put Alice in the office to meet the man. Let me go with you to White Plains."

"I'll think of it," replied Old King Brady, "and I think it very likely I shall decide to let things go your way."

That ended it for the night. Next morning Old King Brady informed Harry that he had decided to take his advice. Alice, who lives around the corner, on Waverly place, was accordingly summoned by telephone. Meanwhile Old King Brady had gone around to the barber's. Thus Harry met Alice alone. Alice came bustling into the library.

"Well, what do you want of me?" she asked.

"I sent for you to tell you that you look as fresh and sweet this morning as a June rose," replied Harry. "If you ask what I really want I will tell you. It is that you and I get married right away."

"Bold boy! Will you never have done with your nonsense?"

"Never! Incidentally it is not nonsense."

Nor was it. Young King Brady was in dead earnest, although as a matter of fact he had not intended anything of this sort when Alice first came in. For let it be understood that Harry has long been deeply in love with his talented partner. He has proposed many times, and while Alice has never said yes, she has never said no. So Harry still hopes for the day when she will be ready to retire from the detective field and become his wife. But this time had not come yet, and when Harry tried to kiss his "fresh June rose," he got his face slapped for his pains. Then they came down to business. Alice is all business. Really she is something remarkable in that respect for a woman.

"Why, this is great!" she exclaimed. "And

won't Mrs. Von Beck be pleased. I have a great mind to call her up on the telephone and inform her right away."

"Don't you do it," said Harry, "unless you are anxious to get jumped on."

Just then Old King Brady entered.

"Ha! Excuse me! I hope I'm not intruding," he exclaimed. "If there is any chance of Harry obtaining the dearest wish of his heart through this interview I'll pull out right away."

"Not the slightest chance," replied Alice, blushing.

"What, never?"

"Well—er—not just yet."

"I will give you a deed of this house, Alice, if you will marry Harry to-morrow."

"This house is an old rattle-trap, and the inducement is not sufficient," laughed Alice.

But the house was a very good one, and the lot exceedingly valuable. The fact is, Alice is devoted to her profession, and has no idea, for the present at least, of tying herself down with the cares of married life. The matter at issue was now discussed to a finish. Alice was ordered to the new downtown office. Her only instructions were to use her own judgment in handling Birdsong in case he called. About nine o'clock Alice took up her quarters at the office. She did not have to wait long before business began. In about half an hour the door opened and in walked Mr. Nicholas Birdsong. Alice, who had not seen him before, was bound to admit that his was the most hideous face she had ever laid eyes upon.

"I am looking for Mr. Grossmeyer," said the real estate man after suffering his eyes to roam about the office for a minute. "He isn't in."

"As you see," replied Alice. "I represent him, however."

"Ah! And when do you expect him in?"

"I can't say. What is the name?"

"Well—er—how far do you represent him, may I ask?"

"Absolutely. I am his daughter."

"Oh!"

"He tells me all his business. He has told me all about you."

"So? Do you know who I am then?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"You are Nicholas Birdsong."

"A good guess."

"I don't have to guess. My father has described you to me. Take a seat."

This time Birdsong sat down. He was just as cool a card as ever, but he seemed not to know what to say. Consequently he stared at Alice until she grew tired.

"I hope you will know me again when you see me," she snapped.

"Yes, I think I shall," replied Birdsong. "Indeed, I am quite sure of it. When do you expect your father in?"

"As I told you before, I don't know. He is a very busy man."

"So am I."

"His movements are very uncertain. They will be particularly so to-day. It would not surprise me if he did not come at all."

"Why?"

"Because he has the trustees of those dif-

ferent charitable institutions to see, Mr. Birdsong."

"Ah?"

"Yes."

"Is he determined to turn me down?"

"You certainly tried to turn him down last night."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do. Now look here, Mr. Birdsong, there is no use in beating about the bush. If you are here to do business say so."

"Is it too late?"

"It may not be."

Birdsong heaved a sigh of relief.

"Very well then," he replied. "I am prepared to do business, but not with you."

CHAPTER III.—At Oak Ridge Hall.

The Bradys talked matters over, and decided to go up to White Plains in an automobile. Old King Brady looked Dr. Gilbertson in the Medical Register, and found that the man kept a private sanitarium called Oak Ridge Hall, in the outskirts of White Plains. Dr. Gilbertson was duly registered as a physician. Of course it was not possible to learn anything about the man's reputation offhand, so the Bradys determined to put it right through to White Plains and make their inquiries there.

On the way up they had considerable discussion as to the best manner of proceeding. Harry was for going directly to the sanitarium and trying to win Dr. Gilbertson over on their side. But to this Old King Brady could not agree.

"We may alarm the man and defeat our own ends," he said. "He may send his prisoner off somewhere else. We must go slow."

It was finally decided to go first to the chief of police of White Plains, take him in their confidence, and be guided somewhat by his advice. And this was done. The chief proved to be a courteous gentleman, and very willing to oblige Old King Brady, whom he at once recognized by his peculiar dress.

"We are upon a case which makes it necessary to learn all we can about Dr. Gilbertson, of Oak Ridge Sanitarium," said Old King Brady. "I shall esteem it a great favor if you will help us out."

"Certainly I will help you in any way I can," replied the chief. "Just what is it you want to know?"

"To begin with, what sort of a reputation does this Dr. Gilbertson bear?"

"Here in town a bad one. He is a surly, disagreeable fellow for one thing, and universally unpopular from this fact, and because he is a very hard man to get money out of."

"Has he ever been up against the law in connection with his sanitarium?"

"Twice. Once a patient died there, and when the local undertaker laid out the corpse, he found that the man had been terribly beaten. He reported the matter, and an inquest was held. There was talk of arresting the doctor, but as the friends of the dead man refused to cooperate with the authorities, nothing was done."

"And the other time?"

"Friends of a female patient, a Mrs. Fabian,

had him arrested for illegally detaining her. The woman was examined by a commission, and pronounced sane. The case was removed from our local courts, and I never heard how it ended."

"Then, on the whole, the doctor's reputation is decidedly shady."

"Very much that way."

Old King Brady, having satisfied himself on these points, proceeded to tell the chief the whole story.

"Now, we are rather in doubt as to the best way of getting at this thing," he said, "but it seems to me that if we could manage to get into the sanitarium as visitors, we might see and recognize this young man by his resemblance to the veiled picture. This done, our course would shape itself, no doubt. Could you go with us and gain admission, do you suppose?"

"I don't know whether he would let me in or not," was the reply.

"But you are personally acquainted with him?"

"Oh, yes. I have met him many times."

"Do you object to going?"

"Not in the least, if I can get you in."

"Suppose you call the doctor up on the telephone and see what you can do?"

The chief complied. Dr. Gilbertson was in New York, it appeared. His assistant, Dr. Brown, extended an invitation to the chief to bring his friends to Oak Ridge Hall.

"We get there," chuckled the chief.

"It may amount to nothing," replied Old King Brady. "Such a patient as I describe will probably be kept under cover. Still we can only try our luck."

They went directly to the sanitarium in the automobile. Oak Ridge Hall proved to be a collection of small pavilions, four in number, built upon the crest of a barren hill, where a few oak trees grew. The grounds were surrounded by a high board fence, and the entrance was guarded by a double gate. There was also a small gate opening upon a foot path which extended away from a gatekeeper's lodge. That considerable money had been spent on the institution was easy to see. The gatekeeper, a surly, disagreeable looking fellow, came out as the automobile stopped. He recognized the chief and opened the big gate without question. It was lined with trees, and on either side was a high wire fence, cutting off the grounds, which were fairly attractive. As the month was January, and the day rather cold, although there was no snow on the ground, the enclosure presented rather a forlorn look. There were, however, three men and two women walking about behind the wire fence on the left. Both these fences enclosed pavilions. There were also two other pavilions at the end of the driveway which were not enclosed. One of these was surrounded by a broad piazza, upon which two men, well wrapped up, were talking. They came forward and one asked the chief who he wished to see.

"We are here by appointment with Dr. Brown," was the reply.

The man went to the door and rang the electric bell. In a few minutes the door was opened by a sickly-looking man wearing a sort of semi-uniform.

"You are to come right in, gentlemen," he said, and he conducted them to a well furnished re-

ception room, where in a few minutes they were joined by Dr. Brown, who proved to be a young man of cold, repellent manner. The chief introduced Old King Brady as Dr. Burns, of Albany, and the old detective introduced Harry as his son.

"I am intending to start a similar institution to this in the spring, doctor," he said, "and my son and I are visiting various sanitariums in order to gain some idea as to what we want."

"We are always glad to show our place," replied Dr. Brown, coldly.

"Do you take violent patients?" continued the old detective.

"We take all kinds. At present we have only three in the violent ward. Of course we are not anxious for such people, but if their friends are willing to pay the price, we take them in. Gentlemen, be pleased to follow me."

He showed them through the building they were in first. It was well arranged, with reference to the business, and everything was neat and clean, and in some respects almost luxurious. The Bradys saw at a glance that this was the home of such patients as were easily controlled. They saw several patients in the general sitting room, and others in private rooms, but none of them appeared to fill the bill. They visited the second unenclosed pavilion. The arrangement was much the same as the first. Dr. Brown informed them that there were thirty-two patients altogether in the institution at that time. When they had made the rounds of the second pavilion the doctor seemed to think he had done enough.

"Those two enclosed pavilions, doctor," said Old King Brady, "what about them?"

"Those are the violent wards," replied the doctor. "One for men and the other for women. At the present time the woman's pavilion is closed."

"I should very much like to see the other."

"I have no authority to show it. I shall be sure to get called down by Dr. Gilbertson if I do."

"I should take it as a particular favor if you can oblige me friends, doctor," said the chief.

The doctor seemed to hesitate, but at last he yielded.

Oh, well, come along," he said. "I don't know as I care much how he takes it. I am pulling out of her at the end of the week anyway."

"Good!" thought Old King Brady. "You're the man for my money."

"How is that?" he asked aloud.

"Well, to tell the truth, gentlemen, the doctor and I don't pull together. Too much work for too little pay. Then I don't approve of his methods. In short, I'm done."

Old King Brady said no more than, but he determined to cultivate Dr. Brown. They were led to a gate which opened into the wire inclosure and passed into the pavilion, where they were admitted by a colored man, a perfect giant of a fellow. He seemed surprised to see them, and himself undertook to call Dr. Brown to task.

"Of co'se, doctor, if you say fo' to let dese yere gem'n in I've gotter do it," he growled, "but I shall have to report the matter to Dr. Gilbertson shuah."

"Report it," replied Dr. Brown, coldly.

"Do you want me to go wif yo, doctah?"

"No. I'll show the gentlemen around."

The violent pavilion was long and narrow. There were two corridors on two floors, with four rooms on a side which look right in. Dr. Brown led the way to one of the rooms in which sat an elderly man dressed in clothes made of heavy white flannel. He sat quietly in an easy chair reading a book.

"Well, Mr. Fram, and how are you?" called Dr. Brown.

The old man looked up from his book. His face was that of a saint; his white hair and beard made him look like some old patriarch.

"Doctor, I am in perfect health," he replied. "Who are these people you have brought to see me?"

"Friends of mine, Mr. Fram."

"Are you going to let me out and introduce me?"

"Can't do that, Mr. Fram."

"And why? I promise to be good."

"But you know what you did last time I let you out."

"That's all old business. Try me again."

"No."

"No."

The doctor spoke decidedly, and no sooner had he uttered the word than the man sprang up, rushed to the bars and broke out with a torrent of the foulest abuse. Dr. Brown immediately led his guests away.

"That's the way he goes on all the time," he said. "He thinks he is a vampire. If I had let him out he would have flown at one of you and torn your throat with his teeth."

"He looks so mild and respectable," said the chief.

"He is anything but that. He treated his second wife horribly, and she put him here. They say he murdered his first wife, and he is suspected of having killed one of his sons."

"Rich people, I suppose," remarked Old King Brady.

"Very. From the South. Worth all kinds of money. Dr. Gilbertson gets \$50 a week for the care of that fiend. The wonder to me is that such people don't die. His case is absolutely hopeless. He attacked me once. I never want such an experience again."

The doctor took them upstairs and showed two other patients.

"That's all," he said.

And as yet no sign of Ned Foster or anyone at all resembling the young man. But Old King Brady did not attempt to question Dr. Brown. He determined to build on the remarks the man had let fall. So just as they were leaving he scribbled something in his memorandum book. Tearing out the leaf, he folded it up small and slipped it into the hands of Dr. Brown, wrapped in a five dollar bill.

"This for your kind attention, doctor," he said.

"Oh, not at all," replied the doctor. "I couldn't think of it."

But as he made no motion to hand the money back, Old King Brady knew that he could think of it, and so it proved. And on the paper the old detective had written thus:

"Doctor:—If you are a wise man and want to earn a great big fee, you will dine with me at

the White Plains Hotel to-day. I shall wait for you until one o'clock."

"Well, you didn't make anything out of that move," said the chief when they were clear of the place.

"I don't know whether I did or not," replied Old King Brady. "That remains to be seen."

CHAPTER IX.—Alice Receives An Offer of Marriage.

"So you won't do business with me, Mr. Birdsong," remarked Alice in answer to what the real estate dealer said. "Well, you don't have to. If you prefer to wait and see my father, I don't care."

Birdsong looked at her fixedly for a moment and then said:

"Do you know that you are a very good looking young woman."

"Sure, I know it," laughed Alice. "Tell me something new."

"Are you married?"

"What an impudent question? How dare you asked me such a thing as that?"

"What is your name?"

"Kate Grossmeyer. But look here, you didn't answer my question."

"I'll answer it now. I am a man who dares to dare anything. That is the way I have grown rich. See here, miss, I am worth a million and a half in good New York real estate, besides other property, and all that is outside of my claim on the Foster estate."

"Why do you tell me that, Mr. Birdsong?" demanded Alice, wondering what in the world the man was driving at.

"I tell it to you to see if we can't come to some understanding. How would you like to marry me?"

"Marry you!" cried Alice, really taken by surprise. "Why, you old fright! You must be crazy!"

She said it before she thought, but now she checked herself.

"What can your object be in proposing to me?" she asked in a serious tone.

Birdsong moistened his lips nervously.

"I'll tell you," he said.

"But hold on!" cried Alice. "Just stop and think. Last night you tried to kill my father."

"I know I did. But if you marry me you will not regret it."

"Upon my word," thought Alice, "there is many a young woman in this big town who would jump at that offer, though knowing that old man to be as wicked as I know him to be."

Her work appeared to be done for the day, and Alice was just about to close up when she heard someone else approaching the office. She thought for a moment that it was Birdsong returning, but the door opened and in walked old Rafael Gomez, the Venezuelan Consul. Alice had given the man this address at his particular request, the consul stating that he thought it possible that he might learn more about the Foster business through another source.

"Ah, Miss Montgomery," he said, "I have come to see you, for I have good news. When I told

you I might learn more about this young man, it was because I happened to remember that the steamer Zebra, of our Venezuela line, was at Maracaibo at just about the time of that escape. I knew the Zebra was in port here now, so I sent for the captain, asking him to call on me. Word came back that he was away, but would return to the steamer at three o'clock, so I have prepared a letter of introduction for you, and I suggest that you go aboard the Zebra and present it. He may know nothing, but on the other hand he may know a great deal. It can do no harm in any case."

Alice thought the same, and she accepted the letter, thanking the old Venezuelan heartily for his courtesy. She then went up to the Union Square office, reaching there just in time to receive a telephone message from Harry.

"Well, how are you getting along up there?" called Alice.

"Fine," came the answer. "We have just been through the sanitarium, and while we didn't learn anything of Ned Foster, the Governor managed to get next to the assistant doctor. He has just telephoned and will dine with us here at one."

"Oh, going to work in with him?"

"That's what we are hoping to do. How are you getting on?"

"Fine. I have seen Birdsong."

"Well, what do you think of him?"

"I think him a perfect love of a man."

"So handsome."

"A perfect Adonis."

"How did you make out with him?"

"Splendidly, Harry. Splendidly. He offered to marry me, and to give me the Foster house on Fifth avenue and half a million dollars on our wedding day."

"Come, Alice, you are joking."

"Indeed I am not. I am in dead earnest."

"You accepted, of course."

"Certainly I did. Your nose is out of joint now, sir. I am to be Mrs. Birdsong by the end of the week."

Then Alice hung up the receiver, cutting Harry off. At three o'clock she presented herself at the Brooklyn pier near the Wall street ferry, where the steamer Zebra lay. Captain Robertson, a bluff Scotchman, received her, read the letter and invited her into his cabin.

"As it happens, Miss Montgomery, you have come to the right shop for information," he said. "Not only was I in Venezuela at the time that young man who had been sentenced for life to silence escaped from the castle at Maracaibo, but I brought him up to New York with me on the Zebra."

"You don't mean it?" cried Alice. "I thought he went aboard the English tramp steamer Shoreditch Castle?"

"So he did, but he was transferred to the Zebra out at sea."

"Was he crazy?"

"Not at all. His mind was somewhat shaken, and physically he was a wreck, but no one could call him insane."

"This is very important. You are not aware, perhaps, that he was reported to have been shot, and that he never reached his friends in New York?"

"I see that Mr. Gomez puts it so in the letter. I cannot understand it. When we put in at Kingston, Jamaica, young Foster cabled a cousin of his. The man met him at this pier with a cab, and they went away together."

"Do you remember the cousin's name?"

"I do, for it was a very peculiar one. Birdsong."

Alice was triumphant. She pressed Captain Robertson further.

"Tell me all the details, captain," she said.

The captain complied, but the details are scarcely of sufficient interest to be given here. The point was simply that Ned Foster was put on board the Zebra by the captain of the Shore-ditch Castle, and that he went away with Birdsong in his cab.

"And you mean to say that nothing was ever heard of him after that?" demanded the captain.

"Nothing," replied Alice. "Birdsong reported him dead to his grandmother, and is trying to claim the old lady's large estate. Old King Brady is certain that Ned Foster lives, and is locked up in some lunatic asylum. He even thinks he knows which one, and is working on that matter now."

"Well, then, I only hope he may succeed," replied the captain. "If I can be of any assistance, let me know. I took a great liking to that young fellow. He was shamefully used by the Venezuelan government, but it seems that his worst enemy is one who should have been his friend."

"You can help a lot by making an affidavit to what you told me," said Alice.

"I will draw up a written statement right now, and go up to Borough Hall and swear to it before a notary," declared the captain.

CHAPTER X.—Harry Secures Strong Evidence Against Birdsong.

When Old King Brady got the telephone message from Dr. Brown he knew that he had practically captured his man. His reply was that if the doctor wished he would send the automobile for him. This, however, was declined. At a little after one the Bradys, who were waiting in the hotel office, saw the doctor hurriedly enter. Old King Brady arose to meet him.

"Doctor, I am right glad to see you," he said. "If you prefer a private interview——"

"Not at all," broke in the doctor. "I don't care who hears what we say. Even before I got your note, Dr. Burns, I had fully made up my mind to pull out of Oak Ridge Hall."

"Let me put you right on one point as a starter. I am not a doctor. I am Old King Brady the detective. Possibly you may have heard of me."

"I not only have heard of you, but I suspected the first moment I saw you," replied the doctor.

Harry was then introduced, and they went to dinner.

"And now, Mr. Brady," began Dr. Brown, "I am going to disappoint you. I think I can guess the nature of the subject upon which you want to pump me. It is the Kelly affair, is it not?"

"I don't know what the Kelly affair is. What I want to know is this: Have you a young man named Edward Foster locked in at Oak Ridge Hall who is entirely sane?"

"Edward Kelly."

"He may go under a false name."

"Yes, it is the same person. His name is Foster. He told me so many times, but Dr. Gilbertson, who is the greatest hypocrite in the world, and could not tell the truth if he tried, has always insisted that the man actually was insane, and that his claim to be Edward Foster was one of his delusions."

"Then we understand each other. You say you are going to disappoint me. Isn't he there now?"

"He is not. He was secretly removed at night two days ago."

"And you don't know where he was taken to?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"That is certainly disappointing. Was the young man well when you saw him last?"

"Perfectly well and entirely sane."

"Under what circumstances was he removed?"

"I have no idea. It was done at night. He has been in the violent ward ever since I came to Dr. Gilbertson, a year ago. No one was allowed to see him but the doctor, that colored attendant and myself."

"Did they treat him badly?"

"Shamefully, on account of two attempts he had made to escape, one of which came very near succeeding. I felt sincerely sorry for the poor fellow. He had suffered horribly in Venezuela."

"Ah! He told you all that?"

"Yes."

"And who was responsible for his detention?"

"A cousin of his, a rich real estate dealer in New York named Birdsong."

"And yet you did not report the case."

Dr. Brown shrugged his shoulders.

"I had my living to make," he replied. "Then it would have been no light matter to gain the enmity of Dr. Gilbertson. A most vindictive man. However, I am done now. I should have reported the case if he had stayed."

Old King Brady then told the whole story.

"If you will take hold and help us, doctor, there is no doubt that you can earn a fat fee in case we succeed," he said.

"I'll help you if I can," was the reply, "but I have grave fears for the young fellow."

"Do you think Gilbertson would kill him?"

"It's a hard thing to say, but I do think it. He is a very dangerous man."

Old King Brady now gave Dr. Brown the letter he had taken from Birdsong's desk.

"Hello!" cried the doctor. "This puts a different face on the affair."

"I thought you would say so. What do you think now?"

"Well, there are two ways of looking at it. Birdsong may have paid up and taken Foster away. On the other hand, Gilbertson may have removed him in order to get a stronger hold on Birdsong."

"I am inclined to favor the latter supposition."

"Do you happen to know if Birdsong paid?"

"No. I know nothing about the financial end of the business. Have you anything to suggest?"

"I don't know that I have, unless Jeff may know what has become of the man."

"Who is Jeff? The colored attendant in the violent ward?"

"Yes."

"He is deeply in Dr. Gilbertson's confidence?"

"More so than anyone else."

"What time do you expect Dr. Gilbertson back?"

"Probably to-night. He is seldom away over right, but if he intended to stay away he would not tell me."

"Can't we get hold of Jeff?" asked Harry at this juncture.

"It is as broad as it is long," said Old King Brady. "If he knows anything, we might force the information, but if he don't we should have to turn him loose, and he would go straight to the doctor and report. Look here, doctor, how would Dr. Gilbertson be likely to have taken Foster away?"

"In his automobile, I suppose."

"Oh, he has an automobile?"

"Yes."

"And who is his chauffeur?"

"He keeps one, a man named Cronin, but he is just as apt to drive the machine himself."

"Still we ought to try our luck with this Cronin. He might be made to give away some important point."

"Perhaps you might succeed that way. I am sure I never could. We have quarrelled too many times."

"We must do something," said Old King Brady. "Doctor G. would scarcely have undertaken to remove the man alone last night, it seems to me."

"Well, I don't know about that. He is a very strenuous person, and would do almost anything if his mind was set. But I have been thinking, Mr. Brady, I don't know just how far you care to go. There might be a way."

"If you think of any way, why out with it, my dear fellow. We are wasting time. Every minutes brings up nearer to Dr. Gilbertson's return."

"The doctor's desk stands in his private office. If you cared to force it very likely you would come across some letter which would settle the whole business."

"I'll take the chance and go you," said Old King Brady promptly. "We will get right back there now."

"Hold on," said Harry. "That may bring us up against trouble and delay. Does Dr. Gilbertson have to pass this house on his way to Oak Ridge Hall? I suppose he does."

"Why not necessarily, certainly, but if he comes by the train he will."

"Does Cronin meet him with the automobile?"

"He may have orders to that effect. If he has, he would not tell me."

"Then my suggestion is this: I will go with you and tackle the doctor's desk. You, Governor, wait here and watch for the doctor's coming. If you see him, telephone us at once. We shall thus be prepared and able to avoid a surprise."

"I subscribe to that," replied Old King Brady. "But give me a good description of Dr. Gilbertson's automobile and of Cronin."

Dr. Brown complied.

"I shall know them if I see them," said Old King Brady. "Now go along, you two, and depend upon me keeping a close watch."

And it proved to be well that it was thus arranged. Dr. Brown and Harry departed together in the automobile. They had scarcely been gone ten minutes when a red automobile, driven by a man in every way resembling Cronin, went rolling past the hotel in the direction of the station. Old King Brady asked one of the loungers in the hotel to what office it belonged, and was informed that it was Dr. Gilbertson's. He consulted a timetable and found that a train was due from New York in ten minutes. Old King Brady hurried to the telephone, called up Oak Ridge Hall, and getting Harry, informed him of what he had seen in words which no one listening could understand, as previous arranged. In answer Harry stated that they had but just reached the hall, and had passed the automobile on the way. Old King Brady went down to the station and awaited the arrival of the train.

In due time it came, and he saw Dr. Gilbertson, whom he readily recognized from Dr. Brown's description, leave it and get into the automobile, which immediately started in the direction of Oak Ridge Hall. Meanwhile Harry and Dr. Brown had not been idle. Realizing the necessity of all haste after seeing Cronin going towards the station in the auto, Dr. Brown took Harry directly to Dr. Gilbertson's private office, which was locked.

"I think, Brady," he said, "that if you will accommodate me by taking a small trunk in your automobile, I will pack up now and pull right out. Dr. Gilbertson only owes me a trifle, and I had sooner lose it than face his wrath when he finds that his desk has been opened."

"Certainly," replied Harry. "Pack up and I will help you carry the trunk. But he will not necessarily discover my work. I flatter myself that I am something of an expert in my line."

And as he spoke, he produced a bunch of skeleton keys and had the door of the private office open before the doctor could wink twice. They passed inside, locked the door behind them, and Harry examined the desk.

It proved so. Harry opened it without the least difficulty. He went directly for the doctor's letter file, but found nothing of interest. Meanwhile, Dr. Brown had departed to do his packing. Harry tackled the pigeon holes next. Here he was more successful, for in a minute he came across a bundle of letters tied with tape and labelled:

"Birdsong Correspondence."

Evidently Dr. Gilbertson was a man of method. Harry ran over the letters, examining the dates. The last one was dated but two days before. This he opened and read as follows:

"Dear Doctor.—I enclose check for my full indebtedness to you. I have been busy, and the matter was overlooked. Now, sir, I beg to inform you that I resent the tone of your last letter. Therefore, I propose to sever all connection with you. Deliver your patient at my house, 268 Van Linderen avenue, Bronx, to-morrow night, any time after midnight, and in future I will assume his care. If you consider that I

owe you anything more for this additional service or for any other reason, make up your bill and it will be promptly settled.

"As for your threats, I can only say that I do not fear you. For what you have done you have been liberally paid. If you think to try to blackmail me, permit me to inform you that you will find yourself up against the wrong man. Yours truly.
"Nicholas Birdsong."

This was enough! But Harry determined to go the whole figure, pocketed all the letters, feeling that he would surely discover in them evidence to land Birdsong in Sing Sing, and to make it very warm for Dr. Gilbertson as well. He then examined the doctor's letter book, but could find no copy of any letter to Birdsong. This done, he took a packet of letters from another pigeon hole, and dividing them, put half in the place of those he had abstracted. Then he locked up the desk and the office door, leaving no trace of his work behind. Dr. Brown came hurrying downstairs a moment later.

"I'm all ready," he said. "Did you find anything?"

"All I want to run Birdsong to earth," chuckled Harry. "In all probability that unfortunate boy has been taken to his house."

"So? Do you know where it is?"

"Oh, yes. If I didn't I have the address in a letter I found in the desk in which he orders the removal of the boy. But shall I lend you a hand with your trunk, doctor? There don't seem to be anyone around."

"Yes, if you will. So much the better for us that there is no one around. If I can get away without attracting observation then so much the better for me."

"But the patients?"

"Oh, there is another assistant. He will look out for them."

"Shall you not notify him?"

"No. I am all done here, Brady. I don't care what happens in the old place now."

But they were not to get out without being seen. For just as they were coming downstairs with the trunk a man entered the hall.

"Going away, doctor?" he exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

"It means that I am going away, Dr. Redmond," was the cool reply. "Be good enough to inform Dr. Gilbertson upon his arrival that I have quit."

Dr. Redmond seemed disposed to press the matter, but Dr. Brown simply would not answer him. Two minutes later, with the trunk in the automobile, he and Harry went flying through the gate.

"Is there any way of avoiding a meeting with Dr. Gilbertson?" demanded Harry.

"Certainly," was the reply. "We will take the back road, which will bring us into White Plains behind the hotel."

This was done. At a certain corner Harry left Dr. Brown in charge of the automobile and went to look for Old King Brady. He found the old detective at the hotel, and exhibited his prize.

"You have done well," said Old King Brady, "and now we want to get out of here as quick as possible, for Dr. Gilbertson has already gone to

the sanitarium. Did you leave things well cleaned up behind you?"

"So well cleaned up, Governor, that unless he makes a special search for these letters I have no idea he will discover his loss to-night."

"Good!" replied Old King Brady. "Now then let us get back to Birdsong's; but what troubles me is that he may have murdered the boy."

They returned to the automobile, and a few minutes later, with Harry at the wheel, were heading for the Bronx.

CHAPTER XI.—Prisoners In the Secret Vault.

Alice waited in vain for the return of the Bradys from White Plains that afternoon. The short January day closed in and nothing was heard from them. Alice began to grow somewhat alarmed. And her alarm was increased after her return home, when at about ten o'clock, the detectives' colored man of all work, called her up on the telephone.

"Miss Alice," he said, "de boss and Mr. Harry hain't come home. Dey's a man what keeps a carriage up in de Bronx what's jest now telephoned to say dat a man what he's dead sure was Old King Brady, along wid two others, one who was sure Master Harry, done lef' an automobile in his carriage dis afternoon, an' hain't come back after it. Don't you fink you better call him up an' see what he is driving at? I couldn't jest understand him right. I feels considerably alarmed."

"Of course. You mean the man keeps a garage, Julius?" asked Alice.

"Yes, Miss Alice. Dat is what I dont say, him keeps a carriage where dey leaves automobiles."

It seemed impossible to make Julius appreciate the difference between a carriage and a garage, but he had obtained the garage keeper's telephone number all right, and Alice proceeded to call the man up.

"I am a partner of Old King Brady's," she said. "What is it you were trying to say a while ago?"

"Why, it is like this," came back over the wire. "About four o'clock three gentlemen came to my place in an automobile, and asked if they could leave it here. The elder man I at once recognized as Old King Brady, the detective, for I have seen him before when I used to keep a livery stable in West Fifty-seventh street. He said that they would return inside of an hour, but as they haven't been back, I began to get worried for fear something had happened to them, so I thought I would call up and see what I could learn."

Alice asked for a detailed description when she found that no name had been left at the garage, and what she got confirmed her in the belief that the man was right, and that two of the passengers in the automobile were Old King Brady and Harry. As for the third, she could not make him out, but when she learned that a trunk, bearing the name of Frank H. Brown, M.D., was in the auto, she rightly concluded that Dr. Brown must be some person whom the Bradys had picked up at Oak Ridge Hall. She inquired further as to the location of the garage,

and learned that it was within a short distance of Nicholas Birdsong's house, on Van Linderen avenue. This compelled her to share the alarm of the garage keeper, and she thanked him for the trouble he had been at, saying that she would look into the matter at once.

She promptly telephoned the garage at which the automobile had been hired, one patronized right along by the Bradys, and ordered them to send another machine to the old house on Washington Square. Thither Alice hurried, and entering by aid of the latchkey, which she always carries, looked up Julius.

"I talked with that man," she said. "There is no doubt that it was the Bradys who left the automobile there. I am afraid it is serious, Julius. Will you go up there with me?"

Now nothing could have afforded Julius more delight than to take a hand in one of Old King Brady's cases. He is a very efficient man, and has often acted as chauffeur for the detectives. Thus Alice, preferring him to a stranger, started for the Bronx with Julius as soon as the auto came. They made the best time possible, but it was a long road, and consequently it was after eleven when they reached the garage. The automobile with the trunk was still there unclaimed.

"Don't you ask the names of your customers?" inquired Alice after she had exchanged a few words with the man.

"Why, yes; as a rule I do," was the reply. "But, you see, in this case I was so sure that the old man was Mr. Bradys that I did not consider it necessary."

"Did you notice which way they went?" asked Alice.

But the garage keeper had been busy at the time and had not observed. Alice then inquired the way to Van Linderen avenue, and leaving her own auto at the garage, she and Julius set out to look up Birdsong's house. They soon located it in the distance, Alice readily recognizing it from the description Harry had given her. As they walked toward it she told Julius of the adventure of the detectives in this same house the night before.

"I have no doubt, Julius, that this man has caught them again," she said. "We must be careful that he don't catch us, or we shall all be in the soup together."

They reached the house to find it dark and deserted looking. Remembering what she had heard about the electric alarm bells, Alice was careful not to try the doors. She and Julius went around the house, but nothing was to be seen calculated to help them out.

"There is only one way," Alice said, "and that is to ring the bell and face this man. Here, Julius, you take this revolver, and mind you don't let him see it until I give the word."

"He better not try any monkey business wiv' yo' den, Miss Alice," replied Julius. "If he do, I'll blow de hull top of his head off, suah ting."

"Stand by and do just as you are told, Julius," replied Alice.

She led the way back to the front door, where she pulled the bell. But it was not one bell which rang. There came a perfect volley of sound. Bells were ringing all over the house. But even this appeared to do no good. They

waited, but on one responded either at window or door.

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The garage keeper was quite right. The Bradys and Dr. Brown had tumbled into trouble, sure enough. But this time Mr. Nicholas Birdsong was not directly concerned in the deal. Leaving the garage, the detectives and the doctor walked directly to the house which had been the scene of their adventures the previous night. Old King Brady, who had read all of Birdsong's letters to Dr. Gilbertson on the ride down from White Plains, had come to the determination to arrest the man on the spot, as the letters, which were all over his own signature, contained ample evidence to convict him of imprisoning a sane man in a private lunatic asylum if nothing else. So upon arriving at the house the old detective started the bells ringing. There was no response at the front door, and none when he tried it at the back.

"The old fraud can't be home," remarked Harry. "It looks bad for our work. He would scarcely leave so important a prisoner as Ned Foster unguarded here."

"I don't know about that," replied Old King Brady. "There is one thing certain about Birdsong; he is a man both mentally and morally twisted. There is no telling what a person of his kind may take it into their heads to do. However, we won't wait for him. Fortunately, there appears to be no one observing us, so I think we may venture to break in."

They went around to the back. Here Old King Brady was more successful than he had hoped for. If Birdsong had put modern locks on his doors, it might have been necessary to break in through the windows. But the lock on this door was of an exceedingly ancient pattern. It was strong enough to resist almost any force, but it's mechanism was simple, and it readily yielded to the old detective's skeleton keys. Of course, Dr. Brown had been informed of their adventure the night before, and he needed no caution once they were inside the house, to look where he stepped, and indeed, you may be sure that the Bradys did the same. But they stumbled upon neither pitfalls nor mantraps. Wandering from room to room, it became a matter of wonder that so rich a man could live in the midst of such discomfort.

The Bradys, having made the rounds, proceeded to tackle the cellar into which Birdsong had gone to look for them the night before. The door was under the back stairs, and was secured with a heavy padlock. Harry fied the staple through and easily removed this lock. Producing his electric flashlight, Old King Brady led the way down the cellar stairs. It was just an ordinary cellar, extending under the entire house. But in the ceiling was a square shaft which clearly led up to the trapdoor, which the Bradys had so narrowly escaped falling through. On one side of the cellar was a coal bin, partially filled. On the other was a low arch in the wall, in which was set a rusty iron door.

"We must get a look behind that," said Old King Brady.

He stopped and pulled on a huge iron ring which hung suspended where the latch should have been. The door swung open, and behind it

was revealed a flight of rickety wooden steps. "Can this be the prisoner's cell?" queried Harry. "It doesn't look as if anyone had been down into that hole in a hundred years."

"Doesn't, eh?" chuckled Old King Brady. "Look down there."

He pointed to something white lying on the third step down.

"What is it?" questioned the doctor.

"Looks to me very much like a slice of bread," replied Old King Brady, "and that suggests the thought of feeding a prisoner. Come on! I think we are on the right track now."

He stooped, passed under the arch and descended the stairs. It was a slice of bread, sure enough. This gave them hope. They descended into a square brick vault beneath the garden. Here there was another iron door to which a new spring lock had been fitted on the outside. Apparently the door had no other fastening. Old King Brady drew the latch back and flashed his light into a second vault of about the same size as the first, where stretched upon an old mattress lay a young man in deep sleep.

"Foster!" cried Dr. Brown, and they all crowded into the vault.

Old King Brady flashed his light down upon the sleeper. He was a young man of about Harry's age, rather good looking but with a terrible pallor upon his face. He seemed to be very nervous. His face and limbs twitched in his sleep.

"And that is your patient, doctor?" questioned Old King Brady.

"Sure," replied the doctor. "There he is, however they got him here. He used to think he was badly enough off at Oak Ridge Hall. It is worse here."

"Arouse him," ordered Old King Brady. "We must get him out of this at once."

As the old detective spoke a draught of cold air came sweeping in under the arch from some broken window in the cellar probably. Whether it was this which did the business, or whether it swung shut of its own weight, it is hard to say, but at all events at the same instant the door closed with a loud slam.

"Botheration!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

He made a dive for the door and tried to open it. Useless effort. The door was as firm as a rock. The Bradys and Dr. Brown were imprisoned in the secret vault.

CHAPTER XII.—Conclusion.

The slamming of the door awoke the sleeper, and he sat up on the mattress. He looked dazed, but his face lighted up as his eyes rested upon Dr. Brown.

"Why, doctor! Have you come to take me out of this dreadful place?" he exclaimed. "I might have known! You are my only friend. But who are those gentlemen, then?"

"Friends of yours, too, Ned," replied the doctor, taking his hand. "They are detectives—the Bradys. They are here to save you from

your cousin, who, I suppose, is responsible for you being here."

"He is responsible for all my troubles," replied young Foster, rising. "Yes. I was drugged last night by Dr. Gilbertson shortly after you left me. Jeff held me while the doctor forced something down my throat. It put me right to sleep, and when I woke up I was in this place. I have seen that horrible fiend twice. Once last night, and again this morning. I am sure he means to kill me. Gentlemen, you have come just in time."

"You refer to Birdsong?" questioned Old King Brady.

"Yes. Nicholas Birdsong, my cousin. Do you know the man?"

"Perfectly well," replied Old King Brady, "though our acquaintance is confined to the last few days since we have been trying to rescue you from his clutches, young man."

"And who engaged you?" asked Foster, curiously. "I understand that my grandmother is dead. Who else is there in all the world who cares a snap of the finger for me?"

Now was the time to speak a good word for Mrs. Von Beck, and Old King Brady did not hesitate to do it.

"We are hired by a lady whom you do not know," he replied. "A Mrs. Von Beck, now residing in your grandmother's house. She saw your portrait in the reception room, and learning your story, how you were sentenced for life to silence, she was moved to look into the report of your death, engaged us to find you, and here we are."

"May God bless the dear soul, whoever she is!" cried the young man, and he was moved to tears.

"Oh, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, "you don't know how terribly I have suffered. Dr. Brown will tell you. He knows that I am not insane. If you have any pity, you will get me out of here right away."

"Unfortunately," replied Old King Brady, "that is going to be difficult to do unless we can open that door, which the wind appears to have closed on us through our carelessness in not securing it. However, we will try it again."

They did try it, not only once, but again and again, and each trial failed. The Bradys now found themselves with plenty of time on their hands to listen to Ned Foster's story. The iron door resisted all their efforts. Open it they could not, hence they were obliged to remain prisoners in the vault. And what young Foster had to tell only went to confirm what the Bradys and Alice had unearthed through their untiring exertions. His story need not be repeated, as the truth concerning this young man's remarkable adventures has already been made sufficiently plain. Hours passed, and night had long since closed in upon the prisoners in the secret vault. It was an anxious time. At any instant Nicholas Birdsong was liable to look it upon them. Of this the Bradys had no fear, of course. Their real fear was that the man had no intention of returning; that his real scheme was to let his cousin perish of starvation in the secret vault. And as midnight drew near it began, indeed, to look as if Old King Brady's fears were not ill-founded. It was, therefore, a positive relief

when footsteps were heard outside in the outer vault.

"At last!" exclaimed the old detective. "Now, brother Birdsong, we shall see what we can do for you."

A second later the door was thrown open, and instead of the big hulking body and ugly face of Nicholas Birdsong, Alice and Julius appeared outside! The relief was immense, of course. What was said need not be chronicled here. The prisoners left the house, to which Alice had easily obtained entrance once she set about it, for Old King Brady had left the back door unlocked, and proceeded to the garage. Then it was back to New York in their automobiles, and Ned Foster was safely lodged in the Brady's house. Dr. Brown also spent the night there, but next morning he pulled out and went to the house of a friend.

That morning at breakfast there was considerable discussion as to the best way of capturing Birdsong. It was finally concluded to make Mrs. Von Beck's house the clearing house for that little job, while Alice should be the bait to attract the man. So Alice sat down and wrote Birdsong a letter, telling him that upon due consideration she and her "father" had decided to accept his proposal, and asking him to meet her at Mrs. Von Beck's at twelve o'clock, when she would be pleased to discuss the matter further. This letter was dispatched to Birdsong's office by a District Messenger boy, and then Alice started to call the lady up on the telephone. But right here they were met with disappointment. Mrs. Von Beck had gone to Philadelphia for the day, it seemed. In fact, Mrs. Martin, her chaperone, was not quite certain that she would return before the day following. The lady, however, upon learning the circumstances, assured Alice that Mrs. Von Beck's absence need make no difference, and that they could make use of the house as they pleased.

So it was decided to go ahead with the undertaking as originally arranged. As Ned's wardrobe was in sad condition, Harry took him out and saw that he was properly provided for. The poor fellow was terribly nervous. He complained of the noise and bustle affecting his head. Twice he caught hold of Harry and told him that he was going to faint, but nothing came of it. At half-past eleven the Bradys took him to Mrs. Von Beck's. At the last minute, Alice, much to her regret, found herself unable to go, being called away upon an important matter. Reaching the house, they found Mrs. Martin out, but the servant informed them that word had been left that they were to do as they pleased. The Bradys were now in their usual dress. Old King Brady even kept his big hat on, feeling that Birdsong probably knew him by sight, and preferring to impress the man with his presence to the fullest extent. Harry followed his example, and they accordingly made themselves at home in the reception room while waiting for their victim. And while waiting they talked with Ned Foster.

"Were you really forced to keep absolute silence all the time you remained in the castle at Maracaibo?" Harry asked.

"Absolute silence," was the reply. "You can form no conception how terrible it was."

"But didn't the attendants speak to you?" inquired the old detective.

"Not a word. My meals were thrown in through a hole, such as they were. It seemed some times as if I must speak, but I remembered poor Skinner's fate, and refrained."

He had already told how he had escaped through the connivance of one of the keepers, who ventured to break the silence at last. Conversation now turned to the veiled portrait.

"Why do you suppose Birdsong left it as it was?" Harry asked.

"I am sure I can't imagine, unless it was to impress the world with the idea that he actually believed me to be dead," was the reply.

And this the Bradys always believed was the true reason.

"I wonder if I have changed so much?" exclaimed Ned at last. "Compare me with the veiled picture, gentlemen, and let me have your opinion."

He kicked a hassock up under the mantelpiece. Standing upon this, Ned started to draw the veil, when suddenly the portiers were swept apart and the horrible face of the big man appeared. Both detectives were startled. Turning as pale as death, the young man on the hassock reeled back from the veiled picture and fell sprawling on the floor. It was Birdsong, who had stolen in upon them unawares.

"You meddlesome fiends!" he shouted. "I'll get square with you!"

And he made one rush for Old King Brady, but reeled back at the sight of Harry's revolver. With difficulty Old King Brady got the handcuffs on. He then telephoned for the patrol wagon, and that night Nicholas Birdsong slept in the Tombs. Ned revived on the instant from the faint brought on by his nervous condition. As to what came the way of this much-abused young man afterwards it was soon told. Birdsong was tried, convicted, and sentenced to Sing Sing for ten years. Alice told Ned all about Mrs. Von Beck having fallen in love with his pictured face. At first Ned laughed at the idea. Then he called on Mrs. Von Beck, out of "gratitude," as he said. From gratitude to love was but a short step. Ned called on the widow many times after that first call, and within six months they were married in Grace Church in great style. And so Mrs. Von Beck won out and gained a second millionaire husband, which was pretty good for a hello girl, for Ned came with his own. Certainly Ned was not sentenced to life for silence this trip, for the woman was a tremendous talker. But, be all this as it may, at last accounts the happy pair were getting along very well.

Dr. Gilbertson, prosecuted by Ned, jumped bail and disappeared. Ned bought Oak Ridge Hall, and established Dr. Brown there. The enterprise has proved a big success. So far as the Bradys were concerned, they were most liberally treated, both by Mrs. Von Beck and young Foster himself. Few detectives have scored a bigger reward than the double fee which grew out of the case of "The Bradys and the Veiled Picture."

Next week's issue will contain: "THE BRADYS AND NO 775; or, THE MESSENGER BOY WHO WAS ROBBED."